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June 16, 2015

**Contact:** Lorenza Munoz, [213-458-6279](tel:213-458-6279)

**Email:** [lmunoz@bos.lacounty.gov](mailto:lmunoz@bos.lacounty.gov)

**Contact:** Christina Villacorte, [213-447-1277](tel:213-447-1277)

**Email:** [cvillacorte@bos.lacounty.gov](mailto:cvillacorte@bos.lacounty.gov)

## **Board of Supervisors Approves Wage Increase for Caregivers**

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors voted 4-1 Tuesday to approve a raise for In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) caregivers, who currently receive a “poverty wage” of only \$9.65 per hour – not including health benefits – to look after low-income patients who are blind, disabled, or over age 65, allowing them to remain safely in their own home instead of going into an expensive nursing home or other forms of institutionalized care.

Acting on a motion by Supervisors Mark Ridley-Thomas and Hilda Solis, the board approved an increase to \$11 per hour by February 2016 and \$11.18 per hour by February 2017 – contingent on the State of California continuing to cover 65 percent of the non-federal cost of the IHSS program.

“What we seek to accomplish today is to put homecare workers on a path to \$15 per hour, a wage that shows we are serious about lifting people out of poverty,” Supervisor Ridley-Thomas said to applause from members of the audience at the Hall of Administration.

In a May 19 [Op-Ed in the Huffington Post](#), Supervisor Ridley-Thomas laid out his case for addressing wage stagnation and income inequality, particularly for caregivers working under the IHSS program, which is funded and administered by the federal, state, and county governments.

“These workers, who take care of the most vulnerable elderly residents among us, are being paid less than \$10 an hour or \$20,000 per year... which is less than the federal poverty level for a family of three,” Supervisor Ridley-Thomas wrote in the Op-Ed. “How is it that we tolerate this kind of wage for those who take care of our grandparents, parents and – relatively soon – us baby boomers?”

In their motion, Supervisors Ridley-Thomas and Solis – the latter a former Labor Secretary in the Obama administration, said the current wage of \$9.65 per hour “consigns caregivers to a life of poverty.”

“At this wage level, many home care workers are forced to rely on public assistance programs to make ends meet,” the supervisors said in the motion.

The state is already slated to raise the state’s minimum wage to \$10 per hour, effective January 2016. Supervisors Ridley-Thomas and Solis’ motion, approved Tuesday, bumps up the wage of IHSS caregivers to \$11, effective February 2016, and then to \$11.18, effective February 2017, the maximum permissible wage under state law governing the IHSS program.

To cover the county’s share of the increase, the board would have to add \$11.9 million to the Department of Public Social Services budget for the 2015-2016 fiscal year, and another \$30.6 million in the next fiscal year. The money would be disbursed by the [Personal Assistance Services Council](#), established by the board in 1997 as the employer of record for caregivers, who are hired directly by IHSS patients.

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